

Hyderabad: Peasants seek probe into 'malpractices' of farm management

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HYDERABAD, Aug 10: Peasants of a government-run farm in Setharja, Khairpur on Sunday appealed to Sindh agriculture minister and secretary to order a comprehensive inquiry into what they called corrupt practices of the farm management and officials concerned.

The peasants' leaders Ali Mohammad and Mohammad Sharif Arain accused at a news conference here that management of Basic Seed Farm, Setharja, had deprived them of their share in crops. The management implicated them in false cases and threatened to eject them when they protested against the injustice, they said.

They accused a reforms committee appointed by the former government two years ago and farm management of denying peasants their just rights and looting the farm's resources.

They appealed to the Sindh agriculture minister, secretary and managing director of Sindh Seed Corporation to punish the officers who were looting the farm's resources.

Ali Mohammad said that many haris were denied their share in cotton in 2006-07 by manipulating the crop's weight. They also misappropriated the government's share, he said.

He said that the management, which had not even made arrangements for getting last year's wheat threshed, was telling haris that they would not be given their share in wheat because the government planned to use the entire crop as seed for next season.

"We have no objection to the government's taking away the entire wheat crop," provided the government gave them wheat in return for their share in the crop for personal consumption, he said.

He demanded inquiry into the purchase of fertiliser and pesticide for last year's wheat crop and alleged that the haris had been fleeced in their purchase. As a rule the haris were to transport wheat from the farm to the godown and the management was to pay transport charges but since two years the management was compelling haris to pay for transport charges, he said.

He said that the watercourses supplying water to the farm had been excavated through machines and the charges had to be paid from farm reforms funds but the management again forced haris to pay excavation charges amounting to over Rs400,000. This amount must be refunded to haris, he demanded.

He complained that the haris had not been given premium for last years' cotton crop nor had they been paid price for oil used in tube-wells. The rent of tractor in 2006 was Rs300 per hour but the management extracted Rs360 per hour from haris, he said.

He said that the haris were made to pay Rs100 per maund for threshing of canola. It was the highest rate throughout Pakistan, he said and demanded refund of excess amount after inquiry.

He alleged that the farm management had received tens of millions of rupees for land development

but the amount was misappropriated by officials concerned and the henchmen of former chief minister Dr Arbab Ghulam Rahim.

He demanded an inquiry into misappropriation of funds and said that when the haris raised voice against these excesses, a theft case was registered against 40 haris who were being constantly harassed by police as well as the farm management.

Mr Loond said in answer to queries that the Setharja farm spread over 1,042 acres of land was established in 1939. 900 acres were reserved for cultivation whereas 35 acres were earmarked for the graveyard and on the remaining land, four villages of haris had been set up.

It is the third generation which is working on the farm, he said and added that 87 haris were registered as per official record.

Bureau Report

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